NOAA CIO Council
Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2003

Attendees:

Carl Staton, Chair	Ira Grossman
Bill Turnbull	Fred Walton
Greg Bass	Chris Mcnereny
Nancy Huang	Rick Roberts
Hugh Johnson	Becky Vasvary
Rob Mairs	Mike Hart
Sarah Maloney	Lara Petze
Larry Tyminski	Ryan Bissett
Barry West	John Parker
Diana Hynek	Rob Swisher
John Villemarette	Tom Murphy
Gary Falk	Jeremy Warren
Robert Kidwell	Craig Miller

Handouts:

- NOAA Grants Online Project Update
- Active Directory Presentation Slides, Cost Analysis, and related Documentation
- NOAA Observing Systems Architecture Presentation Slides

Decisions/Action Items:

- Active Directory - Rename project to tie it to NOAA's COOP Plan and include it in the OCIO's budget priority list for presentation to the NEP and the CFOs. (ASAP, Bill Turnbull)
- Enterprise Calendar - NOAA will have an Enterprise Calendar System initially implemented within the L.O.s that can afford to proceed. The L.O.s not implementing the system initially agree that no other system will be implemented within their L.O. Carl will issue a memo documenting this decision. (ASAP, Gary Falk)

Presentations/Discussions:

1. NOAA Grants System - Mike Hart

An update on the status of the NOAA Grants System was presented.   A PDF copy of the slides is attached. The project is currently in the stage of requirements definition/high-level architecture. A very aggressive schedule was proposed, with a contract award scheduled for 6/1 and implementation starting immediately after that, with a completion goal of 12/04. Carl and

others suggested that this was too aggressive and advised not to commit to it. Besides the various sources of possible process delays, there is the question of where the $3.5M needed for the first year will come from. Scott Gudes and others say that the system needs to be done, but no source of funds has been identified yet. Carl pointed out that a Delegation of Procurement Authority will also be needed.

Mike described other related collaboration efforts. In order to help alleviate immediate problems, they are working with NMFS so that NMFS's online grants information can be given to and used by the Grants office electronically, instead of the current paper transactions. This affects about 35% of NOAA's grants.

2. NOAA Observing System Architecture - Rob Mairs

Rob described how the Observing System team is using the Metis software to document the baseline observing systems, linkages, and requirements. Although the assigned task was to address NOAA-owned and/or operated systems, they really need to address other systems that are used to gather data for NOAA use. This includes both operational and research systems. All of this information is needed to provide a baseline from which future observing system business decisions could be made.

The baseline is about 75% complete. Rob showed sample Metis query pages. The Metis software has been linked to a GIS system so that queries can produce maps showing the locations of systems. It has been a bit difficult to get across the message that a baseline is needed before a target can be produced, and that a baseline takes time. The project hopes to have a final architecture description document by the end of January 2003, and to complete a target architecture by December 2003. To do the latter they need an objective analysis of requirements, an observing system strategy, and a prioritized list of key science questions the systems need to help answer.

Rob pointed out that Metis can be useful to others beyond the CIO and IT worlds. They did need expertise to build the original meta-model. Ira provide some update information on the availability of Metis on GSA schedule and a planned DOC agreement.

3. Active Directory - Lara Petze/Ryan Bissett

Ryan made the presentation. Driving forces to move to the Active Directory (AD) are that Microsoft NT support ends in December 2003 and that the current situation makes enforcement of IT security policies and efficient/secure resource sharing difficult. AD could significantly reduce redundant administrative effort and resources. The AD Working Group considered a variety of options, including independent L.O or Program Office ADs, or migrating to a different Network Authentication System. Their recommended option is a "NOAA Active Directory Empty Root Design".

Among the advantages of this option are secure Windows resource sharing, the facilitation of enterprise applications and PKI, remote access to resources, enhanced top-down security, and remote desktop configuration management. Disadvantages include complexity, subjecting organizations to danger from some other organization which may include a weak link, slowing down of organizational efforts that will have to wait for a NOAA-level system, and the fact that some organizations that have already deployed AD may have to redo some work. A first-year cost estimate of $1,169K was presented. This doesn't include licensing costs or the cost of bring operating systems on PCs up to current versions.

There was discussion about the fact the AD will really only affect computers with Microsoft Windows operating systems, about 65% of NOAA based on an inventory done.

There was also discussion about the fact that this option would be a top-down hierarchy administrative model that is very different than the current method of operation. It would take time for people to adjust to it. Also, the OCIO might need a project manager to handle implementation.

Nancy Huang brought up the issue of timing. Microsoft is expected to release an updated version of software with AD functionality. She suggested that it might be better to prototype AD but to wait until the updated software is released before doing a full-scale implementation.

4. Active Directory - Carl Staton

Carl led a follow-up discussion as to what to do on the Active Directory issue. There was general agreement that pursing the NOAA-level Empty Root approach was a good idea but that funding it was a real problem. For 2005 Carl will add it to the President's Management Agenda funding request, but how can we fund things in the meantime?. The biggest issue is the money for the contract designers and security specialist, $707K.

Rob Mairs pointed out that something named "Active Directory" isn't likely to get funding, and that this should be presented as resource sharing and a key to providing support for Continuity of Operations (COOP) at Site C and elsewhere. We already know from the experience of Scott Gudes that the current situation doesn't allow COOP managers to work effectively at remote sites, and that Active Directory is a way of providing the capability to access the files and resources needed.

Carl did not want to present a $600K+ option directly to Scott Gudes as a Homeland Security item, but wants to first add it to the CIO budget proposal to be presented to the CFOs and NEP. The project will need to be added to the list of other CIO recommended projects and ranked with them.

5. Enterprise Calendar - Fred Walton

Fred presented the calendar estimates from Oracle that he had just received last night. Fred discussed the MCB proposal on how to allocate the costs. The proposal is to equally share the hardware costs and pro-rate the software costs on a per-person basis. While there was agreement that this system was the way to eventually go, L.O.s give it different priority and there is the regular funding problem. Bob Kidwell suggested that we set use of this system as the goal to be implemented as possible. No L.O. has to implement it right away, but no one should implement any other calendar process. Carl will issue a statement to this effect.

6. File Transfer Standard - Nancy Huang

Nancy addressed the fact that WordPerfect is still the NOAA transfer standard, but many offices are buying and using Word. There was discussion as to whether a standard was needed or possible. Opinions varied. Ira suggested that XML was the eventual standard to use, and while there was some agreement to this, the feeling was that XML and NOAA aren't ready for that yet. A change to any standard might incur costs that can't be funded right now. Another issue discussed was that 30+% of NOAA personnel don't use PCs with Microsoft operating systems, and that the standards being discussed may not work with Linux and UNIX systems, and may have problems with Macs. Nancy suggested an interim solution that would allow work-groups that need to collaborate to select their own transfer standard.

The conclusion was that NOAA may want to see a long-term goal of a Word transfer standard, but with no requirement to move to it right away. That would avoid any immediate budget impact and give people time to be trained. L.O. CIOs would be allowed to give waivers to the standard when business needs require a different approach.

7. Other Discussion

During the discussion Carl said that the CIOs should alert people on their Exhibit 300s for the FY 05 budget process. The 300s need to propose end-to-end solutions that are completely thought out or Carl will not recommend them. For example, if you propose to acquire data you need to deal with what happens to that data, from acquisition to data center or other end-status.

Minutes prepared by: Richard Roberts, OCIO, January 23, 2003